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Contact: Stacie Paxton  
202-226-7747

## **Capps Introduces Legislation to Promote Children's Dental Health**

Washington, D.C. -- Congresswoman Lois Capps today announced that she introduced bipartisan legislation to promote children's dental health.

"Dental disease in very young children is a significant problem on the Central Coast and across the nation, impacting nearly one-in-five children," said Capps. "My bill will provide much needed funding to help treat young children at risk for developing tooth decay and other significant dental problems."

Capps' bill -- H.R. 4821, The Children's Dental Health Preservation Act -- authorizes the Secretary of Health and Human services to fund grants to states for dental health programs for children. Specifically, the funds would be used to identify children at risk of developing cavities, provide dental services to low income children, and to train health care professionals on how to educate parents on oral disease prevention. Capps will introduce her bipartisan legislation with Republican Congressman Charles Norwood (GA-10) -- the only dentist in Congress. The bill has been endorsed by the American Dental Association.

"Many times parents just haven't been shown how to take care of their young children's dental needs. My bill will help parents access information on the basic ways to prevent tooth decay," said Capps.

Last month, the first-ever Surgeon General's report on oral health found that low income children are experiencing significant dental problems because most have little or no dental care. According to a 1999 Santa Barbara County Health Department study, 30 percent of all children in Santa Barbara County have no dental insurance and 27 percent do not have annual dental check-ups. Nationwide, the Health Care Finance Agency estimates that more than \$100 million is spent on hospital costs to treat children with severe tooth decay.

"The high cost of dental care is prohibiting many young children on the Central Coast from receiving the care they need and deserve," said Capps. "My bill is cost effective. Too much money is being spent to treat problems that could have been prevented by regular checkups and basic cleaning. It's time to address the problem before it starts."

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